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A
DISQUISITION

Concerning

Ecclesiastical Councils.

By *Increase Mather.* D. D.

1716.

1

A
DISQUISITION

Concerning

Ecclesiastical Councils.

Proving, that not only Pastors, But Brethren delegated by the Churches, have equally a Right to a decisive Vote in such Assemblies. To which is added, Proposals concerning Confociation of Churches, Agreed upon by a *Synod*, which Convened at *Boston*, in *New-England*.

With a *Preface*, containing a further Vindication of the
Congregational Discipline.

By *Increase Mather*. D. D.

Prov. 11. 14. *In the Multitude of Counsellors there is safety.*

Acts 15. 23. *They wrote Letters by them, after this manner, The Apostles, and Elders, and Brethren.*

Jus ferendi in Concilijs ad Laicos potest Extendi, et plus aliquando, quam ad Multos clericorum. *Gerfom. Citante Parker Ecclesiast. Lib. 3. Cap. 28. p. 387.*

Judicium [in Concilijs] et quoad facultatem, et quoad Authoritatem, Convenire potest doctis qui non sunt Episcopi, *Ames Bellarm. Enerv. Tom. 2 Cap. 2. p. 18.*

Boston, Printed for *N. Boone*, at the Sign of the Bible in *Cornhill*.

1716.

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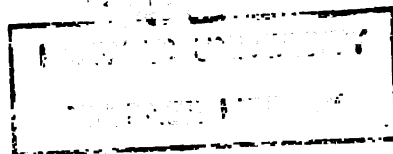
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THE
P r e f a c e .

THAT Controversies about Forms of *Ecclesiastical Discipline*, concern not the *Essentials* of Religion, but that Good Men may be of various Sentiments about them ; *Salva Fide, et Caritate*, is readily acknowledged. Nevertheless, there ought to be a singular Regard unto Truths of this Nature, by us in *New-England*, above what may be affirmed of Men in any other Part of the World, since our Fathers were Persecuted out of their Native Land, and fain to fly into the Wilderness, for their Testimony thereunto : great were the Difficulties and Temptations, and Straits, which they for some time conflicted [ii] with, and all upon no other Account, but that so they might enjoy a *pure Discipline and Church State*, exactly conformable to the Mind of *Christ*, revealed in the Holy Scriptures. On which Account, for their Posterity to depart from what their Fathers have with so much Clearness of Scripture Light, taught and practised, and confirmed with so great Sufferings ; must needs be a greater Sin and Provocation to the Eyes of his Glory, than may be said of any other People on the Face of the Earth.

Concerning *Forms of Church-Government*, besides those of the *Congregational Way*, there have been especially two Pretenders to a *Divine Right*, viz. those that plead for the *Episcopal*, and those that are for the *Presbyterian* Discipline. In the famous Treaty at *Uxbridge* between eminent Divines of both Persuasions, after they had been for *some* time arguing the Matter, the Marquiss of *Hertford* spoke to this Effect ; (a) *My Lords*, (said he) *here is much said concerning Church-Government in* [iii] *general ; the Reverend Divines on the Kings Part affirm, that Episco-*

(a) *Sir B. Whitlock's Memorials. p. 123.*

pacy is *Jure Divino* ; the Reverend Ministers on the other Part do affirm, that Presbytery is *Jure Divino* ; for my part, I think that neither of them, nor any other Form is *Jure Divino*, and therefore desire we may hear no more about that Controversy. I could easily say as that Noble Lord did, as to the two contending Parties, without concurring in his general Negative. I have been told, that the admirably Learned Dr. *Prideux*, (once *Regius Professor* in *Oxford*, and a great Ornament to that University) being asked what Form of Church-Government he thought was of Divine Institution, replied, that he supposed that no particular Form was *Jure Divino* ; but if any were so, it was that which Congregational Men made a Profession of. The Protestant Churches in *Helvetia*, have no Ecclesiastical Discipline ; but if any Members of (b) their Churches fall into Scandals, they turn them over to the Civil Magistrate to discipline them. But so [iv] much has been written by the Learned Mr. *Robert Parker*, (b) to prove that there is a Form of Church-Government of Divine Institution, as I think cannot be answered, and the famous Mr. *George Gillespy* (d) has abundantly confuted *Erastianism*.

It has been injurious to those of the Congregational Persuasion, that the Name of *Brownists* has been undeservedly imposed upon them, from whom they differ essentially. The *Brownists* make the Community to be Rulers ; whereas those of the Congregational Discipline, although they believe that *Privilege*, and in that respect *Power* belongs to the Fraternity, yet that Rule and Government is peculiar to the Presbytery ; and that there cannot be a Valid Church Act without the Consent of the Brotherhood, nor without the Concurrence of the Eldership, in an Organick Church. *Brownists* disown all Churches besides their own, renouncing all the Parish Churches in [v] *England*, and the Reformed Churches in other Nations also, as no true Churches of

(b) *Tigurine Liturgy*. p. 133.

(c) *De Politia Ecclesiastica*. L. 1. Cap. 10 15. et Lib. 2. C. 42. 44.

(d) *Aaron's Rod blossoming*.

Christ. It deserves a Remark, that *Robert Brown*, the Father of those called (e) *Brownists*, after he had maintained, that there was *no Church* in *England*, did himself become a Conformist, and Parson of a Parish in *Northamptonshire*, called *A Church*. Congregationalists are of another Spirit and Principle. They are the genuine Posterity of the good *Old Puritan Nonconformists*. There was long since an admirable little Book, (little in bulk, but great in worth) Printed with that Title, *Puritanismus Anglicanus*, which Dr. *Ames* has honoured with a Preface, whence he has been supposed to be the Composer of it. But a Learned (f) Professor in the University of *Leyden*, has informed us, that not Dr. *Ames*, but Mr. *Bradshaw*, an Eminent Nonconformist Minister, (whose Life has been written by Learned Mr. *Gataker*, and published by Mr. *Clark*) was the Author of that Judici[vi]ous Script. It is perfect *Congregationalism*. The Principles of those, who are for the Congregational Discipline, are such as these. 1. That a Particular Church, as to the Matter of it, ought to consist of such as are in the Judgment of rational Charity, *Saints, and faithful Brethren in Christ*. Of such were the Churches planted by the Apostles. 2. That the *Form* of a Church, or that which does essentiate and distinguish it from all other Societies, is a *Covenant* or Agreement to walk together in the Observation of all the Ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ; which Covenant, tho' only implicit, gives Being to a Church; nevertheless, that an explicit Covenant is most eligible. 3. That a Particular Church, has Power given to them from the Lord Christ, to Choose their own Officers, *viz.* Pastors, Teachers, Ruling-Elders, and Deacons. 4. The Essence of a Minister's Call to the Pastoral Office, is in a mutual Election. They are for the Imposition of the Hands of the Presbytery in Ordination. Nevertheless, they look not on that as essential, but as adiaphorus. [vii] In which they agree with some Eminent Divines of the Presbyterian Judgment, partic-

(e) *Pagit. Hareslography. p. 67.*

(f) *Hornbeck Epist. ad Durium. p. 27.*

ularly with Mr. *Gillespy*, (g) nay with the general Kirk Assembly in *Scotland*, as whoever shall consult Mr. *Calderwood*, (h) will find it often asserted. 5. That a Particular Church being furnished with Elders, at least with a Teaching Elder, has full Power to exercise Discipline within it self, without depending on any other Superiour Jurisdiction. The famous Mr. *Paul Baine* (i) affirms, particular Churches are equal and *independent* on one another. He is (so far as I understand) the first Writer by whom that Term has been used. It is very unreasonable, that for this, Congregational Men should be Nick.named *Independents*. A late Author, who is not of that Way, but a Conformist, (k) says, *That in the Primitive [viii] Times every Particular Church was Independent, h. e. that it had a sufficient Right and Power in it self to punish all its Delinquents, without the Concurrence of other Churches.* There is then no Reason why such as are for the Congregational Discipline, should be reproachfully called *Independents*. Our *New-England* Platform of Church Discipline dislikes that Name. Mr. *Hooker* (l) thinks it was from the Subtilty of Satan, to fix that Name upon those that professed the Truth ; that so the Truth it self might be made nauseous and distastful. Mr. *John Beverley* (m) complains of it. Those famous Apologists, Dr. *Goodwin*, Mr. *Nye*, Mr. *Simpson*, Mr. *Burroughs*, Mr. *Bridge*, (who have been esteemed Pillars amongst those of that Way,) publickly and solemnly declared, *That it was a Maxim to be abhorred, that a single Society of Men, pretending to be endow'd with a Power from Christ, to judge them of the same Body, should arrogate to themselves an Exemption from [ix] giving an Account, or being Censurable of any other, either Christian Magistrate, or Neighbour Churches. So far (say they) was our Judg-*

(g) *English Popish Ceremonies.* p. 285.

(h) *History of Church of Scotland*, p. 26, 383, 418, 425 : (i) *Diocens Trial*.

(k) *Enquiry concerning the Discipline of the Primitive Churches, supposed to be written by Mr. King*, Chap. 8. p. 39.

(l) *Survey, part 2. Chap. 3.*

(m) *Unio Reformantium.*

ment from that Independent Liberty, which has been imputed to us. 6. As all Protestant Writers of Note (*Grotius* only excepted) approve of the Necessity and Usefulness of Ecclesiastical Councils, so do those of the Congregational Discipline. It has ever been their declared Judgment, that when there is Want of either Light or Peace in a Particular Church, it is their Duty to ask for Council, with which Neighbour Churches ought to assist by sending their Elders, and other Messengers, to advise and help them in their Difficulties. And that in Momentous Matters of common Concernment, Particular Churches should proceed with the Concurrence of Neighbour Churches. So in the Ordination of a Pastor, much more in the deposing of one. Thus it has ever been in the Churches of *New-England*. And so it was in the more Primitive Times of Christianity, when the People had Chosen a Pastor, they desired Neighbour Pastors to Concur [x] in his Ordination. When (n) *Alexander* was Chosen a Bishop or Pastor at *Jerusalem*, it was with the Concurrence of the Neighbours. *Cyprian* (o) says, that when *Cornelius* was Ordained, it was the Approbation of Sixteen Pastors. So when any Church had sufficient Cause to depose a Pastor, they would not do it without the Advice of a Council. When *Paulus Samosetanus* (p) was deposed for his Hæretical Opinions, it was with the Concurrence of a Council, which met at *Antioch*, about that Affair. When *Privatus* the Bishop of *Lambese* (q) was deposed, it was with the Advice of many other Pastors.

But if those of the Congregational Discipline are so well affected to Councils, what then is the Difference between a Presbyterian and Congregational Man? Truly, a moderate Presbyterian and a solid Congregational Man differ so little, as that 'tis Pity they [xi] shou'd differ at all. My Dearest Brother *Samuel Mather* (whose Successor I am here in *Boston*, he having been the first that preached the Gospel to that Church

(n) *Euseb. Lib. 6. Cap. 11.*

(o) *Epist. 52.*

(p) *Euseb. Lib. 7. Cap. 30.*

(q) *Cyprian. Epist. 55.*

unto which I have been related for more than fifty years, and after his Removal from *New-England*, became the Pastor of a Congregational Church in *Dublin*, where also he was succeeded by another Brother, the well-known *Nathaniel Mather*) wrote an *Irenicum*, in which he makes it evident, that the Difference among the Brethren of those two Persuasions, is inconsiderable. A principal is, that Presbyterians suppose that Synods have a *Juridical Power*, that they have Authority to Censure Erring Churches, and if obstinate, to deliver them to Satan. But those of the Congregational Persuasion, think, that such Authority belongs only to a Particular Church, and that Synods cannot proceed any further than to a *Sentence of Non communion*. Surely, notwithstanding this Difference, they may be *United Brethren*. And blessed be God, that in *London* they are so. I can reflect on it with Joy, that [xii] when Providence ordered my Sojourning among them for years, I was not wanting to do my Part towards that Union. Mr. *Rutherford* declared, that if those of the Congregational Way, would come up to Mr. *Cotton*, in his Keys of the Kingdom, he would meet them half way : The truth is, there is a greater agreement in many things between the Presbyterians in *Scotland*, and the Congregational Men in *New-England*, than with them and some others that go under the Name of Presbyterians. Particularly, in that they do not make the Essence of a Ministers Call to be in that Rite of Imposition of Hands, but in the Election of the People, and in that their Ruling Elders are Chosen for term of Life. Also in *Scotland* they greatly approve of Reading the Scriptures in Publick Congregations, but not of a *silent Reading*, without any Exposition. They generally say with their famous *Didoclavius*, (alias *Calderwood*) *Non probo lectionem sine interpretatione* ; and with *Austin*, who says, *quare Legitur si filebitur, quare auditur si non exponitur*. Nor do their Ministers use to Conclude their [xiii] Prayers, with the Lord's Prayer as many other Presbyterians, as well as Episcopalians commonly do. But for Ministers to pretend to a Negative Voice in Synods, or for

Councils to take upon them to determine what Elders or Messengers a Church shall submit unto, without the Choice of the Church concerned ; or for Ministers to pretend to be Members of a Council without any Mission from their Churches, nay, altho' the Church declares that they will not send them ; is *Prelatical*, and essentially differing not only from Congregational, but from Presbyterian Principles. And now that I am going out of the World, I could not die in Peace, if I did not discharge my Conscience in bearing Witness against such Innovations, and Invasions on the Rights, and Liberties belonging to Particular Congregations of Christ.

Notwithstanding, the Churches of *New-England* were Planted a Noble Vine, wholly a right Seed, if now there is a visible Degeneracy or Declension as to the *Power of Godliness*, and so as to *Discipline*, it is not to be wondered at. Primitive Purity has rarely [xiv] continued for more than one Generation. The famous Historian (r) (who has by some been called the Father of Ecclesiastical Historians) has recorded a Saying of *Hegeſippus*, that *while the Apostles were living, the Church remained a Virgin ; but when they were removed by Death, 'twas soon corrupted*. How clear is it in the Scripture, that in the Apostle's Days, there were more Pastors or Bishops than one in a Particular Congregational Church. *Acts* 14. 23. So in the Church at *Ephesus*. *Acts* 20. 17, 28. And in the Church at *Philippi*. *Ch.* 1. 1. And in the Church at *Thessalonica*. 1 *Thes.* 5. 12. And in the Church at *Coloss.* there was *Epaphras*, *Archippus*, and *Philemon*. *Clemens Romanus* (the same that is mentioned, *Phil.* 4. 3. when there had been a scandalous Schism in the Church at *Corinth*, one or two chief Brethren having drawn a great Party with them, so as that they rashly and unjustly deposed their Officers ; he wrote a very grave Epistle to that Church, in which he speaks of more Elders or Bishops (for [xv] with him an *Elder* and a *Bishop* are the same) that were among them. This Epistle of *Clement* to the Church

(r) *Eusebius. L. 3. C. 32.*

at *Corinth*, is supposed to be written fourty years after the Apostle *Paul's* Epistle to them. But in the next Age to the Apostles, no more than one Pastor or Bishop might be in one Church. This we see in the Epistles of *Ignatius*, in the Age next following the Apostles. And in the Age after that, *Cyprian* (t) says, *Unus in Ecclesia Sacerdos*. *Tertullian* said as much before him. When *Austin* (u) was grown old, and under Infirmities of Age, his Church desired that *Eradius* might be his Assistant in the Episcopal Office, but *Austin* would not consent to his Ordination, although his Church did earnestly desire it. He objected, that for two Bishops to be at once in the same Church, was contrary to a Decree of the *Nicene Council*. *Valerius* the Bishop of *Hippo* desired, that *Austin* might be a joynt [xvi] Bishop with him. There was great Difficulty in obtaining his Ordination under the same Pretence, that there might not be above one Bishop, or Pastor in the same Church. Thus apt are men, yea, and Councils, to make Decrees that Christ never made. And many other Corruptions immediately after the Apostolical Times, crept into the Church. Particularly, the Observance of *Easter*, with what hot Contentions whether it should be exactly fourteen Dayes after the New Moon, (after the *Jewish* Mode) or on the Lord's-Day after. Whereas the Ecclesiastical Historian *Socrates* ingeniously owns the Truth, that there was no Precept for the Observation of that time as holy, either on the one of those days, or on the other. Which is also confirmed by *Ireneus*. Likewise Exorcising, Signing with the Crosse in Baptism, Unction after Baptism, and the giving Milk and Honey, were early Superstitions, corrupting the Purity of Divine Institutions.

I am troubled that I should differ from so many of the present Ministers in *New-England*, or rather that [xvii] they differ from me. For I fully concur with our *Platform of Church-Discipline*, believing that it is (as in the Title Page is expressed) *gathered out of the Word of God*. I wish all the Ministers in *New England* could say the same. I likewise con-

(t) *Ubi supra*.

(u) See *Austin's Life* written by Mr. King. p. 485, 492.

curr with the two Synods Convened at *Boston*, both that in 1662, and that in 1679. That Vindication of *the Order of the Gospel*, which I wrote Sixteen Years since, had the Approbation of the two most Ancient Ministers then Living among us, *viz.* the Reverend Mr. *Higginson*, and Mr. *Hubbard*, who when they were just leaving the World, were pleased to give a greater Character of that Book, than any thing of mine deserved, and to commend it to the Perusal and Acceptance of the Churches. The Ministers of the First Generation, who were the *First Planters of Churches in this Part of the World*, are all of them gathered to their Fathers. So are many of the Second Generation. I am now the Eldest in this Province. It may in respect of my Age (being in my Seventy Eighth Year) become me to give a [xviii] Word of Advice to Younger Ministers, especially considering, that I have been in a peculiar Respect, a Father to many of them, *viz.* in that they were under my Inspection at the *College*, when for many years, I presided over that Society.

Children, that which I would say to you, is, that considering your Fathers came into this Wilderness, purely on the Account of Ecclesiastical Discipline, and that in Matters relating to Church Order and Government, they might practise all, and nothing more, than what there is Scripture-Warrant for; and that so they might assert the Authority of the Second Commandment, and fully observe it; therefore do you Labour to be well Studied in that Subject. And let me advise you to obtain (if possibly you can) the Books written by Mr. (w) *Cotton*, Mr. (x) *Hooker*, Mr. (y) *Norton*, on those Controversies, also [xix] what has been published by Dr. *Goodwin*, Dr. *Owen*, and by that Man of incomparable Reading and Learning, the Venerable (z) *Robert Parker*.

(w) *Keys of the Kingdom, and Holinefs of Church-Members.*

(x) *Survey of Church-Discipline.*

(y) *Respons. ad Apoll.*

(z) *De Politia Ecclesiastica.*

In the subsequent *Disquisition*, the Reader will not find any thing of *Satyr*, or indecent Reflection on the Brethren, whose Notions are not the same with mine. I have endeavoured to confirm what I assert with Scripture, and with Arguments, and the Authority of Eminent Divines, both Ancient and Modern. Aged *Pareus*, when he had finished his Catechism, said, (as old *Simeon* did) *Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace.* Methinks, I can heartily say so too. Having done this Service for the *Churches in New-England*, I am apt to think, that I have now finished my Testimony, and that my Work in this World is done.

In those Regions of Light and Love, which are Above, there is [xx] more Knowledge gained in one Day, than can be attained unto in an whole Age by Reading, and hard Study, whilst on Earth. There do I long to be. The Lord hasten my being among the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect. *Amen ! Even so, Come Lord Jesus, Come quickly.*

Boston, October 30.

1716.

Increase Mather.

A

DISQUISITION

Concerning

Ecclesiastical Councils.

AN *Ecclesiastical Council*, or *Synod*, is a Convention of duly qualified Persons, called to Consult, and judge about Affairs, in which Churches, one or more are concerned. There have been great Disputes on that Question, *Who has Power to Convoke a Synod?* Whether it belongs to Magistrates, or to Pastors. I shall not insist upon that Enquiry, only say, that if we keep to Scripture, Churches have this Power Belonging to them. There have likewise been some who have decried *all Ecclesiastical Councils* as useless, [2] nay, pernicious ; and as having always done hurt to the Interest of Religion. *Nazianzen's* (a) Expressions Concerning this, are famously known. *Bellarmino* Charges *Luther* with being of that Opinion, but he wrongs him. If *Luther* was against all Councils, why does *Bellarmino* complain of his being *President* of a Council, Convened at *Wittenberg*, in the Year 1536. in which there were (as he says) *Three Hundred Pastors*. I know not of one Protestant Writer of any Fame, that dislikes all *Synods*, *Grotius* only Excepted : It cannot be denied, but that the greatest part of Ecclesiastical *Convocations*, have done more against the Truth than for it, as any man that Consults *Afsted's* Chronology of Councils, will easily perceive. But this has proceeded not from the nature of Councils, but from the

(a) in *Epist. ad Procopium*.

(b) in *Chronol. Cap. 36*.

faultiness of the Persons, of whom they were Constituted. The greatest part of Magistrates, and of Ministers, and of Professed Christians have been Erroneous and Vicious. This [3] ought not to prejudice Men against Magistracy, and Ministry, and Christianity. The same is to be affirmed of Synods, of which also there have been more than a few that have been blessed for the Suppression of Errors, and Establishment of the Churches in the Truth. Several Particular and Provincial Synods have given a faithful Testimony against Errors, both in Judgment and Practice. Writers inform us, that (c) *The first Ecclesiastical Council*, after that held at *Jerusalem*, was in the year 180. in which the Heresy of *Montanus*, and his Followers was Condemn'd. There was a Synod in *Arabia*. *A. D.* 240. In which *Origen* was the President. This Synod Condemned Soul-sleepers. That in *Arabia*, *A. D.* 260. did good Service for the Churches, in Refuting and Condemning the Hæresies of *Paul* of *Samosata*, and the *Paulinities*, as they were Called. And the four *Oecumenical* Councils (altho' as *Calvin*, and many others have observed) we cannot say that any one of them was [4] altogether free from Error in some lesser points, were blessed for the Suppressing of the Hæresies, which did infect the Church in those Ages. The *Nicene* Synod, in which there were 318 *Bishops*, or *Pastors*, besides a numerous Company of Elders, and others whom the Emperour himself, the great *Constantine* honoured with his Presence, Condemned the Heresy of *Arius*. This has been Esteemed the most Celebrious Synod that ever was in the World. 2. The first General Council at *Constantinople*, in which there were an hundred and fifty Pastors, Condemned the Heresy of *Macedonius*. 3. In the great *Ephesine* Synod, there were two hundred Pastors, in which the Heresy of *Nestorius*, who maintained that Christ is two Persons, was Condemned. This Synod Convened, *A. D.* 431. In this very City of *Ephesus*, there was another Synod, though not general one) held but nineteen years after the first; in which an He-

(c) *Eachard. Ecclef. History*, p. 343.

retical Error on the other Extream was Eftablifhed, and feveral Members of the Synod Compelled by Tortures to Subfcribe the Decrees of the Majority. In [5] fo fhort a time have Synods in the fame place, greatly varied from one another. 4. In the General Synod at *Chalcedon, A. D. 451.* there was 630 Paftors, befides Presbyters and Laymen, as they are called : This Synod was of great ufe in Confuting and Condemning the Herefy of *Entyches*, who held that there was but one Nature belonging to our Saviour Chrift; it appears by thefe mentioned, that notwithstanding Councils are not infallible, neverthelefs, they have been very helpful to difcover the Truth, and fettle the Churches in the profeflion of it. They are neceffary, tho' not abfolutely to the *Being*, yet to the *Well-being* of Churches. I have faid nothing of the *Synods* which have been among the *Reformed*, in thefe latter Ages, in *France* and *Holland*, and in other Countries, by fome of which the Intereft of the true Religion has been a great gainer. It has been Objected by fome, *Where have we an Inftitution for Synods?* We anfwer, that the Light of Nature directs unto it : *Plus vident Oculi, quam Oculus.* Many Eyes fee more than one. The Scripture fays, *Where no Counfel is the [6] People fall, but in the multitude of Counfellors there is fafety.* Prov. 11. 14. And therefore they that are wife, will in their difficulties ask for Counfel. 2 Sam. 20. 18. *They were wont to fpeak in old time, faying, they fhall furely ask Counfel at Abel; and fo they ended the Matter.* Moreover, we have Scripture Example for a Synod. The Church in *Antioch*, and that at *Jerufalem*, under the Conduct of the Apoftles, Convened in order to Confulting on a Queftion, which was of common Concernment to them. Dr Owen (d) therefore rightly obferves, *That Synods are Consecrated to the ufe of the Church in all Ages, by the Example of the Apoftles, in their guidance of the firft Churches of Jews and Gentiles, which had the force of a Divine Inftitution, as being by them under the Conduct of the Holy Spirit.*

(d) *Of Gospel Churches.* p. 252.

These things being premised, I proceed to what I have principally designed in this *Disquisition*. There are two *Problems* relating to *Ecclesiastical Councils*, which I have been desired to Express my Thoughts and Judgment concerning them. One of the Questions is,

Whether no Acts of Councils are to be received as Concluding and Decisive, for which there is not the Concurrence of the Major part of the Pastors therein Concerned?

The Affirmative I can in no wise Concur with. I may suppose, that I have as much reason to know what has been the practice of these Churches, as most Men now alive ; having been (however unworthy) in the Teaching Office among them for more than two and fifty years ; (which so far as I understand, no other Minister now in *New-England* has) and assisting in many Councils of the Churches, in which I never knew but that the Concurrence of the Major part of the Delegates was Decisive : Nor was it ever declared, that one half of the Pastors in Synods should have a Negative on the whole Council ; nor Asserted, That Pastors have a greater Authority than *Ruling Elders*, which is implied in the Question under Consideration. Shall we affirm, that if there should be a Council, consisting of ten Pastors, and ten *Ruling* [8] *Elders*, and twenty Brethren, that if five of these Pastors perhaps un-studied, Unexperienced Young Men did not Concur, notwithstanding the other five Pastors, Men of the greatest Learning and Gravity, and all the ten Ruling Elders, and the twenty Brethren fully Concurred, yet that the Act of the Council shall be no Act at all, because the five Young Pastors did not Approve of it ; But this also is implied in the Question. My further Reason for Non-concurrence therewith are these.

1. In the Synod at *Jerusalem* (the first and only Council of Churches mentioned in the Scripture) The Pastors there did not Assume to themselves a Negative over the other Messengers ; therefore neither ought it to be so now. It is clear, that not only Elders, but Brethren acted in that Council ; and that Brethren, and not Pastors only should be sent to

Synods, is acknowledged by us all. It has been disputed between *Protestants* and *Papists*, whether the Brethren, or Pastors only have a definitive Suffrage in Synods. *Papists* are for Pastors only, and [9] so are our *Prelatical* Writers ; one of them lately giveth it for the definition of a Synod, *That it is an Assembly of the Hierarchical Order in Consult for the Conduct of the Churches*. But our most Eminent Protestant Divines maintain, that Ruling Elders and Brethren have equally a definitive Voice with the other ; and this they prove, because it was so in the Synod at *Jerusalem*, they argue strongly ; Why was the Cause brought to the Brethren, and not to the Pastors only if they had not power to judge and to determine concerning the Question before them ? The Decrees of that Synod were sent to the Churches *in the name of the Brethren*, as well as of the *Apostles and Elders*. Acts 15. 22. *It pleased the Apostles and Elders, with the whole Church to send Chosen Men* ; and ver. 23. They wrote Letters by them after this manner ; *The Apostles, and Elders, and Brethren, send greeting* ; and ver. 25. *It seemed good to us*, viz. *Brethren as well as Elders* ; and ver. 28. *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay no greater burden than these necessary things*. The Council at *Basil* would not admit of [10] the *Pope's* Superiority over the whole Council, as if the Council could not make a Valid Act, if the *Pretended Pastor* over all the Churches did not Concur ; and they reasoned thus, (as I find our Protestant Divines have done) that word *Edoxe*, which is translated, it *pleased*, or it *seemed* good to us (which word is used three times by the Synod at *Jerusalem*) being spoken not of Pastors only, but of others also ; it does evidently import, that those others, viz. the *Brethren* in the Assembly had a Power of Judgment and Determination in the Question under debate. They in whose Names the Synodal Decrees were sent to the Churches, had undoubtedly a suffrage, and the right of a definitive Sentence in them. But this was done in the name of the *Brethren*, as well as of the Pastors. Now then, if the major Part of all those who have in common the power of a definitive

Sentence Concurr, the Act of the Council is Valid, and ought to be decisive. It has been objected, that in *Acts* 16. 4. 'tis said, that the Synodal Decrees *were ordained by the Apostles and Elders*, without any mention of [11] the Brethren, therefore it may seem that the Brethren had not a Vote therein. To this both Dr. *Whitaker*, and our Learned *Parker* (e) Reply, that by a *Synechdoche* (very usual in the Scripture) the Apostles and Elders, being a chief part of the Assembly, are put for the whole, the Brethren being included, and are expressly mentioned in the former Chapter. It is past doubt that the Question was brought to the Multitude, *Acts* 15. 12, 13. (Gr. *Plethos unde Plebs*) and they had their part in disputing and discussing the Question then to be decided. Dr. *Owen* (f) speaks the truth, when he says, that it is not necessary that Pastors only should be delegated by the Churches, *but may have others joyned with them ; and had so, until Prelatick Usurpation overturned their Liberties ; therefore there were others besides Paul and Barnabas sent from Antioch to Jerusalem, and the Brethren of the Church* (says the Doctor) *whatever is impudently pretended to the contrary, [12] Concurred in the Decree and Determination there made.* I suppose there are no Ministers in *New-England*, excepting a Conformist or two, but what is in this, of Dr. *Owen's* Judgment ; yet there are some in the World will be ready to say, Dr. *Owen* was indeed a Man of great Learning, but he was an *Independent*, and wrote like himself ; But Dr. *Whitaker* Lived before the Name of *Presbyterian* and *Independent* was heard of ; yet he speaks in an higher strain than the other Doctor has done. This Doctor (g) speaking of the Synod at *Jerusalem*, has these words, *In hoc concilio quivis Laicus et Presbyter definitivum suffragium habuit, non minus quam Petrus.* In this Council (says he) *Every Laick and Presbyter had a definitive Suffrage no less than Peter.* This was Dr. *Whitaker's* Judgment ; a Man of whom it was said, that he was the Oracle of the University, and the Miracle of the World.

(e) *De Polit. Eccles. Cap. 22. p. 396.*

(f) *Ubi supra p. 263.*

(g) *De Consilijs Quest. 3. Cap. 3. p. 97.*

2. When Pastors of Churches Convene in Synods, it is not their Pastoral Office, but the Churches delegation, which gives them a right to be there. It was once disputed, whether the Bishops have not a Negative on the House of Lords, so that there can be no Valid Act of Parliament without their Concurrence. Mr. *Bashaw*, (a Learned Lawyer) proved they had not ; because they did not Sit there by virtue of their Office, but of the *Baronies* which belonged to them. If then *Pastors* do not Sit in *Council* as Officers, but as Messengers deputed by their Churches, they may not Claim a *Negative*. They would have no right to be in this or that Synod, if their Churches did not send them. True it is, when a Council is Called for, the Churches ought to send their Pastors, for they should be, and often are, most able to Judge in Ecclesiastical Affairs. The words in our Platform are these : *Because none are, or should be more fit to know the State of the Churches, nor to advise of ways for the good thereof, than Elders ; therefore it is fit in the Choice of Messengers for such Assemblies, they have special respect to such.* Never-
[14]theless, they do not Sit there as Pastors, Officers, Rulers. Dr. *Owen* speaks Judiciously, and like himself in saying, *That no Persons by virtue of any Office meerly, have right to be Members of Ecclesiastical Synods as such ; neither is there Example or Reason to give colour to any such pretence : Officers of the Church ought to be present in them, but meerly as such, it belongs not to them.* They who say, this is pure *Independent Doctrine*, discover their own ignorance ; for *Bullinger*, *Hyperius*, *Daneus*, *Voetius*, *Vedelius*, and *Zeperus*, who were no Independents, have said as much as this amounts unto, which I have in another Discourse taken notice of. And hence it does not follow, that if Elders have a Negative Voice in their Particular Churches, which our Platform of Discipline gives them ; *Chap. 10 Sect. 11.* that they have so in Councils, because in their Particular Churches they are Rulers, to whom Obedience is due. *Heb. 13. 17.* But in Synods they have no power of Rule. A Pastor when Sitting in Council, acts as a Church Messenger, and not as a

Church Officer ; the Church does not [15] give more power to one of their Messengers, than to another, a *Presbyter*, a *Deacon*, a *Brother* Sitting in the Synod is a Publick Person and Representative of the Church, as well as the *Pastor*. When a City sends to the Convention of the Nation a *Senatour*, and another who is not Vested with any Civil Authority, to be their Representatives, their Power in the Great Council of the Nation is Equal ; tho' when they are in their own City, one has a greater Rule and Authority than the other. *Qui* (says our famous *Parker*, p. 391 and Dr. *Whitaker*) *Ab Ecclesijs pariter delegantur, Pares esse debent*. Why should there not be a *Parity* in the *Power*, when there is a *Parity* in the *Delegation* ? there is great Reason for it, Considering that some Brethren who are sent to Councils, are as able, and it may be, far more able to give Light concerning the Question to be discussed, than any Pastor there. In the famous *Nicene Synod*, the Great *Athanasius* was not then a Pastor, (Bishops have appropriated that name to themselves.) But a *Deacon* in the [16] Church of *Alexandria*. But what Pastor (of which there were more than 300 in that Council) did so much Service for the Truth, in opposition to the *Arian Herefy*, as *Athanasius* did ? who notwithstanding his being but a *Deacon*, was a great part of that Assembly. In the Synod at *Dort*, almost an Hundred years since, some of the *Seniors* (as they call their *Ruling Elders*) did as *Voetius* (who was a Member of that Synod) testifies more Service for the Truth against the *Arminian Remonstrants*, than some of their Pastors did. We have seen in several of our own Churches, Brethren of far greater Learning and Abilities, than their Pastors. And since *the power of Synods is only Consultative*, what good reason can there be given, why such should not have an Equal Vote with any other ? *Si paria aut majora in Laicis dona relucant, Cur non adhiberentur in Concilio Ecclesiastico ?* says *Bullinger* ; (*) If *Laicks* have Equal, or it may be, greater Gifts than Bishops, why should not their Votes in Synods be of [17] Equal Authority with

* *Bullinger de Consilijs cap. 2. p. 137.*

others? It is past doubt, (as we shall further shew) that in the Ancient Councils there were *Brethren as well as Pastors*, and that the *Decision* of the *Question* was brought before them also, which implies an Equality of Power in their Suffrages. It has been objected, that this Principle will make way for Ignorant *Mechanicks* to Carry it in Synods against their Learned Pastors. The Jesuit *Saunders* saveth at the *Centuriators*, because they affirmed, (and most truly) that in the Primitive Churches, others besides Clergy-Men were Members in Synods: He says, that none but Mad-men will believe that *Mechanicks* should Sit in Council with *Bishops*, about Ecclesiastical Affairs. But why not? As for the name of *Mechanicks*, altho' it is Contemptible with us, it is not so in all Nations. It was not so among the *Jews*. The most Learned *Rabbi's* have not thought themselves dishonoured by Learning (i) a Trade. In their Writings we read of *Rabbi Jose*, a Skinner; *Rabbi John* a [18] Shoemaker; *Rabbi Jude* a Baker, *Rabbi Meir* a Scrivener. And we know that the Apostle *Paul*, notwithstanding his being a great Scholar, had learned to be a Tent-maker; and *Aquila*, a man mighty in the Scriptures, was of the same Craft. *Acts* 18. 3. It was frequent among the Ministers of *Bohemia*, to be well skilled in some *Mechanical Operations*. It is not then enough to Unqualify a Man for a Synod, that he is a *Mechanick*; Nor are any Ministers among us (altho' Prelatists are) of that Opinion: Nor have I written this, as if I thought *Every Brother* in a Church, were fit to be Chosen a Member of a Council. Churches ought to be careful in that matter. If they send Ignorant and Unqualified Persons to be their *Delegates*, the fault is in the Church that does so, and not in the Principle, that has been maintained. The Judicious Author of a little Book, with the Title of, *Puritanismus Anglicanus*, affirms, that it is no disparagement to a Church, if some who *Exercise Mechanick Arts*, are Chosen Ruling Elders therein, provided they are Men of Understanding, and of Exemplary Piety. Then why may not

(i) *Du veil. in Acts* 9. 43.

such be Delegates of Churches. I shall further add, that there are *Mechanicks*, who altho' they do not Excel in that which is called *Humane Learning*, they are well Verft and Learned in the Scriptures, spending much time in Consulting thofe Oracles of God, and being Men of great Piety, and Excellent Natural Accomplifhments, they may be very Useful in Synods. Ecclefiaftical Hiftorians, give a Remarkable Account of what happened in the *Nicene Synod*. A Pious Old Man, who was no Clergy-Man, nor Exercifed in Philofophical Notions, by his plain difcourfe did more towards the Conviction of an Heretical Philofoher, than all the Learned Bifhops in the Council could do.

3. *Popery* came in at this door, of Pastors affuming more to themfelves than belongs to them, and the Fraternities readinefs to part with what was theirs. The Famous Author of the Hiftory of the Council of *Trent*, notwithstanding his being a Papift, has Afferted as much as this comes to. Pastors did not at firft pretend unto a *fole Authority*, nor yet unto a *Negative* [20] in Synods, *from the Beginning it was not fo*; nor yet in the days of *Cyprian* (k) (who flourifhed *A. D.* 250.) Presbyters, Deacons, and other People were in his Synod; and yet forty years before him *Origen* (l) complained of *Epifcopal Encroachments* then beginning. In a Synod which Convened at *Rome*, by which *Novatus* was Condemned, there were many Presbyters and Deacons. That Elders and Brethren, as well as Pastors, had in thofe days their Intereft in *Ecclefiaftical Councils*, is fo manifest, that a late *Epifcopalian* cannot deny it; For in the year 270. there was a Synod Convened at *Antioch*, to Compoſe the Troubles there raifed by their Biſhop *Paul*; In this Synod were ſeventy two Biſhops or Pastors. After they had Condemned the Here-tick *Paul*, for his Immorality, as well as Heterodoxy, they gave an account of their proceedings in a Synodical Letter, directed to the then Biſhop of [21] *Rome*, and to others (m) *which Letter was written not*

(k) *Lib.* 3. *Cap.* 10. *has theſe words, Preſente plebis maxima parte.*

(l) *Exod. Homill.* 11.

(m) See Mr. Echards *Ecclefiaftical Hiftory.* p. 432.

only in the Name of the Bishops, but also of the Presbyters, Deacons and Laity, says Mr. *Echard*. And in some of the *General Councils*, there were not only Pastors, but Elders and Laymen too (as they call them) who had their Suffrage in them. So it was in the *Nicene Synod*: *Vitus* and *Vincentius*, who were not Pastors but Elders of the Church then in *Rome*, signed the Acts of that Council; and in that of *Chalcedon* there were many Laicks. I know Papists and Prelates deny this, but the Testimony of *Socrates* and *Eusebius*, and others, have sufficiently proved it. Notwithstanding the Mystery of Iniquity began to work betimes; It was a considerable time before Bishops did *Monopolize* all Synodal Power. The Usurpation came in gradually, until at last none but *Bishops*, who called themselves *Pastors*, were thought worthy to be Members Constituent of *Ecclesiastical Councils*, and of these there were sometimes [22] more than a good many. *Bellarmino* tells of a Council, (which he will have to be his *tenth* (n) General one) in which there were no less than a thousand Bishops. I mention not these things to reflect on any, only Considering that Good and Faithful Pastors in the more Primitive Times, did unawares give a step toward Popery; we should be watchful against any thing that may have the least Aspect that way. The Pastors in the Council at *Nice* (o) giving the precedency to the Bishop of *Rome*, was a fatal thing. Before that was done, the Church of *Rome* (saith *Aeneas Sylvius*) had but little Respect.

4. The Affirmative does not agree with the Doctrine of the most Reformed Churches at this day, Whether Presbyterian or Congregational; If it had been thus Expressed, no Act of the Council shall be decisive without the major part of the *Elders*, it had been [23] (tho' not justifiable) yet less Exceptionable. But as it is now Expressed, it makes *Ruling Elders*, as well as *Brethren* in Councils to signify very Little. When

(n) *Concilium Lateranense*.

(p) *Nicenum Concilium sedem Meretricis qua super septem montes sedet præparavit*.

v. *Parker pol. Lib. p. 269*.

the Scripture informs us that the Synodal Decrees of the Council at *Jerusalem* were Consented to by the *Elders* ; our incomparable *Parker* observes, that *Ruling*, as well as *Teaching Elders* were Comprehended under that Expression. A *Ruling Elder* has not that *Doctrinal Authority*, which a *Pastor* has ; nevertheless his Ruling Authority is Equal with the Pastors ; and when as Delegates they Sit in Synods, may have an Equal Power. Hence *Sutliff*, (a Prelatick Protestant) complains that the Synods of the Reformed Churches *send two Ruling Elders for one Pastor, and so* (says he) *the major part Carries it against their Pastors*. Under the Reforming Parliament in *England*, there was a Presbyterian Provincial Synod, settled at *London* (p) *Consisting of twelve Ministers, and twenty four Lay-Elders*, (as they were cal[24]led) *Acts to be Valid which pass by the Major part*. Sir *B. Whitlock*, in his Memorials, p. 23. informs us, that in the year 1638. It was Determined in *Scotland*, that every Parish should send a *Lay-man*, whom they called a *Ruling Elder*, to their National Synod, which should have Equal Power with the Minister. The Reverend Mr. *Walter Stuart*, in his Collections concerning the Discipline and Government of the Church in *Scotland*, informs us, that their *General Assembly* Consists of Pastors and Ruling Elders ; and that in the beginning of the Reformation, the Number of Pastors were but the fourth part of the Assembly. Their Ruling Elders are not Ordained with Imposition of Hands. He says, that the Assembly is Null where no Ruling Elders are Commissionated. He takes notice, that by the directions of the *English* Parliament, *August* 19. 1545. it is provided, that there be in all Assemblies a Ruling Elder, and one Minister. In the Ecclesiastical Discipline of the Reformed Churches in *France*, 'tis declared, that in their Provincial Synods, the Pastor shall bring one or two El[25]ders with him ; and that if he Comes alone, he shall not be regarded ; that the President in the Synod shall gather the Votes of every Particular, and declare the Major part ; and that Elders

(p) See the History of the Four Last Reigns. p. 159.

deputed by the Churches, *shall have their Votes as the Pastors.* v. Chap. 8. p. 26, 27. So that in a Presbyterian Synod, an Act may be valid, altho' the major part of the Pastors do not Concur; nay, tho' not one Pastor does Concur in the Passing of it. Was not the National *Kirk* Assembly in *Scotland* lately Over-ruled by the Ruling Elders therein. As for *Congregationalists* they Concur with Mr. *Parker*, Dr. *Whitaker*, Dr. *Voet*, and Dr. *Owen*; that the Power which the Pastors have in Synods, is not meerly from their Office, but from the Mission they receive from their Churches; and consequently that there is a parity in the Power: And with this agrees our *Platform of Church Discipline*, which makes the next Efficient Cause of Synods to be the Mission Power of the Churches, and speaks of the Churches sending their *Elders* and other *Messengers*; which supposes that Elders in Synods are Considered as [26] *Messengers*, and not as *Officers*; and that *Synods may not Exercise any Church Authority*, which, if they Sat there under the notion of being Vested with Office-Power might be done. And that this was formerly the Judgment of Ministers in *New-England*, we may Conclude from M. *Hooker's Survey of Church-Discipline*, which had the Approbation of the Pastors then at *New-Haven*, *Guilford*, *Milford*, *Stratford*, *Fairfield*, and many others. Now Mr. *Hooker* (q) asserts, *That in Synods all have Equal Power, because equally Sent and Chosen; and that none act there as Officers, i. e. tho' they be Officers in their own Congregations, they are not so here, but as Called. Here is no Act of an Officer, because the formal reason of his being a Member of the Synod, is the Choosing and Sending. And therefore they that are no Officers if so Chosen, have a right to Vote; and therefore they that are Officers, if not Sent, have no right of Voting. Those Acts which proceed in Common from Men without, as well as in Office, those [27] cannot be Acts of Men in Office, when as all Acts of the Synod are performed by all the Members of the Synod, by Brethren as well as Elders.* Thus speaks our Renowned *Hooker*. Nor do his Sentiments

(q) *Survey Part 4, p. 47, 48, 52.*

differ from *Polanus* † who maintains, that all who are delegated from the Churches, has a Decisive Vote, and that Masters of Schools, and others, who are not Pastors, may be Elected. The *Tripart History* testifies, that there were *Laicks* in the *Nicene Council*.

It has been Objected, that Mr. *Cotton* maintains, (r) that in the Synod of *Ferusalem*, the *Authority of the Decrees* say chiefly, if not only, in the *Apostles and Elders*. Some I hear have laid great weight upon this. I shall a little Consider it. 1. Why should we be, *Addisti in verba ullius Furare Magistri*? Why should we Call any Man Master? *Mat. 23. 12.* The Schol-men will now and then say of their admired Master, *Peter Lombard, Hic Magister non tenetur*. [28] Here we must Crave Leave to Dissent from our Master. So if Mr. *Cotton* has happened to drop a Notion, which does not well Suit with *Congregational Principles*, which we take to be according to the Scripture, we are not bound to write after him. If the Opinion of Men were to decide the Question, there is as much reason to submit to Dr. *Ames* as to any Man; who says, that others besides Pastors may have *Authority* in Ecclesiastical Councils, which is contrary to saying Pastors *only* have Authority. 2. Let his words be taken in a right sense, and I shall say as my Venerable Father *Cotton* does. But there is an Ambiguity in the word *Authority*. Sometimes it is taken for a Power of *Rule* and *Jurisdiction*. A Negative Voice implies no less. No Conventions are said to have Authority in a strict sense, or a Power to impose their Acts on others, but such as have a *Juridical Power*. This cannot be Mr. *Cotton's* Meaning. For all *Congregationalists* (of whom he was not the least) deny that Synods have any such Power. This we see in the Order of the [29] *Congregational Churches* (f) Published in 1658. Our *New-England Platform* declares, that a Synod cannot Exercise any *Act of Authority*. The *Presidential Synod*, *Acts* 15. (they say) did not. The Scripture (saith my

(†) *Polan. Syntag. Theol. Lib. 7. Cap. 14.*

(r) *In his Book of the Keys. p. 26.*

(f) *Thef. 26.*

Learned-Tutor, Mr. Norton (t) does neither Expressly, nor by just Consequence mention Synodal Authority. When the Power of Synods is Called Authority, the Expression is improper, their Power is only Decisive, not Authoritative, i. e. Juridical. This he insists on, and proves by Arguments not easy to be answered. Which is also done by Dr. Goodwin (u) and by my Father. (w) In the Private Colloquies among the Churches in France, they allow Elders and Deacons to propose their Opinions; but (say they) the Decision of the Doctrine, is principally reserved to the Pastors, and to Doctors in Divinity. It is rational, that it should be so, others being not ordina[30]rily capable to Judge in abstruse Controversy. There is a Divine Authority belonging to Pastors. 1 Tim. 5. 17. I suppose Mr. Cotton intended no more than this, that if the Brethren in the Council at Jerusalem had Concurred in their Advice, if all the Elders and Apostles had not Concurred with them, their Decrees would have had little or no Authority. And who will say otherwise? Mr. Norton in his Catechism, has this Question, *What is the Power of a Council?* Answ. To declare the Truth, not to Exercise Authority. Nevertheless, in his Answer to Apollony, p, 118. He proves that the Sentence of a Council is to be Decisive. 3. The words in the Question very much differ from Mr. Cotton's Assertion. For he mentions *Elders*, when as the Question speaks of *Pastors* only, which has a Prelatick Aspect. He allows as much Authority to Ruling Elders in Synods, as to Pastors, which the Question as Expressed does not do, but is Exclusive as to their having a *Negative* on the Acts of the Council. 4. Mr. Cotton speaks of Apostolical Authority. The Power of the Apo[31]stles was greater than ordinary Pastors may pretend unto.

I have now done with the First Problem. There is another Question, which I am also desired to Express my Thoughts concerning it, viz. *Whether if an agrieved Person is not satisfied with the Decision of a former*

(t) *Respons. ad Apollon. Cap. 10. p. 110, 111.*

(u) *Of Church-Government.*

(w) *In his Answer to Mr. Rutherford.*

Council, there shall be another Convened, which shall Consist of such Pastors as shall be directed to by the Ministers of an Association, near to that whereto those of the former Council belonged, which the agrieved should accordingly apply themselves to, and in this way expect a final Issue? Here also I must Enter my vehement Dissent : For,

1. Churches or Persons, whose Case calls for a Council, ought not to have their Liberties Infringed, but they may, and ought to address themselves to such as from whom they may Expect the Clearest Light in the difficulties before them. Why did the Church in *Antioch* go to the Church at *Ferusalem* for Council, but because they had reason to think that there was the greatest Light. There were undoubtedly many other Churches nearer to them than that at *Ferusalem*; for the Synod did not meet there before the Year of Christ 49, which was sixteen or seventeen years after our Lord's Ascension. Within that time Christianity had wonderfully Increased. The *Disciples* were called *Christians* six years before that. *Paul* was Converted fourteen years before that, and had (as well as other Apostles) settled many Churches in *Syria*, which were not so remote from *Antioch* as *Ferusalem* was; why then would they go so far as *Ferusalem*? but because they knew the most able Counsellours in Church Affairs resided there, some of the Apostles especially, and those particularly who seemed to be Pillars, viz. *Peter*, *James*, and *John*. It is supposed that no other Apostles, besides these were present in the Synod at *Ferusalem*.

2. Altho' ordinarily it is most proper, yet nevertheless, it is not always necessary nor proper for those who need Counsel, to address themselves to such as are nearest to them. *Antioch* was about 260 miles distant from *Ferusalem*; and yet for the reason before[33]mentioned, with other Considerations, they passed by many Churches which were nearer to them, and went to *Ferusalem*. It is possible, that the nearest Churches may be prejudiced, or pre-engaged, and therefore not so proper to be Concerned in a Council, as some others more remote. Our Synod in 62

recommends a special reference to Churches, which are by Providence in a convenient Vicinity, but ('tis said) *with Liberty reserved to make use of others as the nature of the Case, or the advantage of opportunity may lead thereunto.*

3. It belongs not to Ministers Authoritatively to direct or to impose upon any agrieved Persons, to whom or to what Churches they shall address themselves for Counsel. Especially 'tis improper for such Ministers as have already been Concerned to nominate a future Council, who will be like to nominate such as they apprehend will Confirm what they themselves have done.

4. We have lately seen a miserably divided Church at *Hull*, very happily restored to Peace, by the blessing of God [34] on the Endeavours of a Council from Neighbour Churches ; which would not have been obtained, if the Method proposed in this Question had been followed.

Thus have I impartially declared my Judgment on the Controverted Questions. Whether the Arguments which satisfy me, will satisfy others, I must Leave with the Divine Providence : Some I believe will on *Second Thoughts* Change their Sentiments. I come now to that which was the main thing Inducing me to this *Disquisition*. I would not by what I have written be misunderstood, as if I were disaffected to the *Confociation of Churches*, in order to the preservation of the Faith and Order of the Gospel professed by them. I know no man that has appeared in this Cause more than I have done. For as to the *Confociation of Churches*, agreeing among themselves, that no new Churches shall be owned by them, or Pastor Ordained or Deposed, or the like matters of Common Concernment done without the approbation of Neighbouring Pastors and Churches : I have more than once declared publicly my [35] Judgment concerning it, as that which is not only lawful, but absolutely necessary for the Establishment of these Churches. The Light of natural reason, as well as Scripture, teaches Churches in Common with other Societies, to *Affociate* and Combine for their Common Safety. This was practised

among the Churches, in the Primitive Times of Christianity ; and it is so in most of the *Reformed Churches* in *Europe* at this day. Some who are not Christians, have seen a necessity of Consociating, to uphold the false Religion professed by them. To say nothing of many Modern Instances, A late Learned (x) Writer informs us, that some Ages since, there happened a great Contention among the *Jewish Synagogues* then in *France*, carried on by three *Rabbins* of Note among them, who were on that account Cast out of their Synagogues, but others admitting them ; what had been done proved insignificant, until they came to a *Consociation*, the Issue whereof was, that the Beginners of [36] the Schism were made incapable of giving them any further Trouble. Now if the Children of this World shall be so wise in their Generation, as to Concur and Consent for the Upholding Superstition ; Why should not the Churches of Christ (having the Countenance of his Word in their doing of it) *with one Consent* maintain the Faith and Order of the Gospel ? Mr. *Cotton* would sometimes bewail the deficiency of the Churches in *New-England* in this particular ; and he did with great solemnity Recommend the Consideration of it to Mr. *Mitchel* (the famous Pastor of the Church in *Cambridge*) when he gave him the Right-hand of Fellowship at his Ordination. And not long before he went to be among the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect, He drew up, *Propositions concerning the Consociation and Communion of Churches, tendred to the Elders and Brethren of the Churches, for their Consideration and acceptance according to God*. Which *Propositions* falling into my Hands, I Published them to the World above forty years ago. The want of a [37] Church-Government has been objected to us, when as we have one *gathered out of the Word of God*, by those Eminent Servants of his, who planted Churches in *New-England*. What else is our *Platform of Church-Discipline* ? Our only want is an agreement to practice what has been our Profession ; which neglect will in time endanger the Overturning our *Church-Government*, and our

Churches too, and it may be introduce another Church-Government, *not gathered out of the Word of God*. In the Synod which met at *Boston*, in the year 1662. altho' there was not an Universal Concurrence in the Answer to the First Question, *Concerning the Subjects of Baptism*. In answer to the *second question about the Consociation of Churches*, there was a marvellous Unanimity ; not one Elder, nor so much as two Brethren in all that Reverend Assembly dissenting, which I am the better able to testify, in that I was of that Synod ; which very few Men now Living were. Not one other that I know of. Such an Unanimity, seems to be of God, and the Consideration of it should be of [38] weight with the Churches. The Pastors in this Province, did at a General Convention of them at *Boston*, May 30. 1700. Pass the following Vote, *To prevent the great mischief to the Evangelical Interests, that may arise from the unadvised proceedings of People to gather Churches in the Neighbourhood, it is provided, that the Result of the Synod, in 1662. relating to the Consociation of Churches may be Republished, with an Address to the Churches, Intimating our desires (and so far as we are Concerned our purposes) to see that Advice carefully attended, and the irregular Proceedings of any People hereafter contrary to that Advice, not Encouraged*. This was the Vote which passed at the mentioned Convention. When also he that writes these Lines, was desired to *Address the Churches* accordingly. What has hitherto retarded, I need not mention. I am now taking my Leave of the World, and of these Churches ; having been in a Publick Capacity, Serving Christ and them (after a poor weak manner) for more than five above a *Jubilee of Years*. I have been often thinking with my self what I [39] should Leave with the Lord's People in this Land as my *Last Legacy*. I have Considered, that the Churches have now greater Cause than formerly to be Concerned by *Ecclesiastical and Scriptural Methods* to preserve the *Faith and Order of the Gospel*, which has been delivered to them. A due attendance to what is from the Scripture declared in the *Synod* mentioned, with respect to the Communion and Consociation

of Churches, will, by the Blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, be a good means to prevent Degeneracy, and to Establish them in that holy Faith and *Order of the Gospel* which has been professed and practised among them ; and by which the Religious People in *New-England*, have been distinguished from other People. I have therefore Caused those *Synodal Conclusions*, to be Republished herewith, and recommend the consideration of them, and an agreement to practise according to what is there determined, with a steadfast adherence to the Platform of Discipline, as my *Dying Farewel to the Churches in New-England*. So will *New-England* remain *New-England*.

[40] The Synods Propositions concerning the Confociation of Churches, are here annexed.

Quest. **W** Hether according to the Word of God, there ought to be a Confociation of Churches, and what should be the manner of it?

Answer. The Answer may be briefly given in the Propositions following.

1. *Every Church or Particular Congregation of Visible Saints in Gospel Order, being furnished with a Presbytery, at least with a Teaching Elder, and walking together in Truth and Peace, hath received from the Lord Jesus, full Power and Authority Ecclesiastical within it self, regularly to Administer all the Ordinances of Christ ; and is not under any other Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction whatsoever.*

For to such a Church Christ hath given the *Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven*, that what they bind or loose on Earth, [41] shall be bound or loosed in Heaven, Mat. 16. 19. and 18. 17, 18. Elders are *Ordained in every Church*. Acts 14. 23. Tit. 1. 5. and are therein Authorized Officially to Administer in the Word, Prayer, Sacraments & Censures, Mat. 28.

19, 20. *Acts* 6. 4. 1 *Cor.* 4. 1, 5. 4. 12. *Acts* 20. 29. 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. and 3, 5. The reprovng of the Church of *Corinth*, and of the *Asian* Churches severally, imports they had Power, each of them within themselves, to reform the Abuses that were amongst them. 1 *Cor.* 5. *Rev.* 2. 14, 20. Hence it follows, Consociation of Churches is not to hinder the Exercise of this Power, but by Counsel from the Word of God, to direct and strengthen the same on all Occasions.

2. *The Churches of Christ do stand in a Sisterly Relation to each other*, Cant. 8. 8 *Being united in the same Faith and Order*, Eph. 4. 5. Col. 2. 5. *To walk by the same Rule*, Phil. 3. 16. *In the Exercise of the same Ordinances for the same End*, Eph. 4. 11, 12, 13. [42] 1 *Cor.* 16. 1. *Under one and the same Political Head, the Lord Jesus Christ*, Eph. 1. 22, 23, and 4, 5. *Rev.* 2. 1. which Union Infers a Communion suitable thereunto.

3. *The Communion of Churches is the faithful improvement of the Gifts of Christ bestowed upon them, for his Service and Glory, and their mutual Good and Edification, according to Capacity and Opportunity*, 1 *Pet.* 4. 10, 11. 1 *Cor.* 12. 4. 7. & 10. 24: 1 *Cor.* 3. 21, 22. Cant. 8. 9. Rom. 1. 15. Gal. 6. 10.

4. *Acts of Communion of Churches are such as these*:

1. Hearty Care and Prayer one for another. 2. *Cor.* 11. 28. Cant. 8. 8. Rom. 1. 9. Col. 1. 9. Eph. 6. 18.

2. To afford Relief by Communication of their Gifts in Temporal or Spiritual Necessities, Rom. 15. 26, 27. *Acts* 11. 22, 29. 2 *Cor.* 8. 1, 4, 14.

3. To maintain Unity and Peace, by giving account one to another of their Publick Actions, when it is orderly desired. *Acts* 11. 2, 3, 4,—1.8 [43] *Josh* 22. 13, 21, 30. 1 *Cor.* 10. 32. and to strengthen one another in their regular Administrations, as in special by a Concurrent Testimony against Persons justly Censured. *Acts* 15. 41. & 16, 4, 5. 2 *Tim.* 4. 15. 3 *Thef.* 3. 14.

4. To seek and accept help from, and give help unto each other.

1. In Case of Divisions and Contentions, where the peace of any Church is disturbed. *Acts* 15. 2.

2. In matters of more than ordinary Importance, [*Prov.* 24. 6. & 15. 22] as Ordination, Translation, and Deposition of Elders, and such like, *2 Tim.* 5. 22

3. In doubtful and difficult Questions and Controversies, Doctrinal or Practical, that may arise, *Acts* 15. 2, 6.

4. For the rectifying of Male-administrations, and healing of Errors and Scandals, that are unhealed amongst themselves, 3 *John* v. 9, 10. *2 Cor.* 2. 6,—11. *1 Cor.* 15. *Rev.* 2. [44] 14, 15, 16. *2 Cor.* 12. 20, 21. and 13. 2. Churches now have need of help in like Cases, as well as Churches then. Christ's Care is still for whole Churches, as well as for Particular Persons; and Apostles being now Ceased, there remains the duty of Brotherly Love, and mutual Care and Helpfulness incumbent on Churches, especially Elders for that End.

5 In Love and Faithfulness, to take notice of the troubles, difficulties, Errors and Scandals of another Church, and to administer help, (when the Case manifestly calls for it) tho' they should so neglect their own good and duty, as not to seek it. *Exod.* 23. 4, 5. *Prov.* 24. 11, 12.

6. To Admonish one another, when there is need and cause for it; and after due means with patience used, to withdraw from a Church or Peccant Party therein, obstinately persisting in Error or Scandal; as in the *Platform and Discipline* (Chap. 15. *Secl.* 2. *Partic.* 3. is more at large [45] declared. *Gal.* 2. 11, 14. *2 Thes.* 3. 3. 6. *Rom.* 16. 17.

5. Confociation of Churches is their Mutual and Solemn Agreement to Exercise Communion in such Acts as aforefaid amongst themselves, with special reference to those Churches, which by Providence are planted in a Convenient Vicinity, tho' with liberty reserved without Offence, to make use of others, as the nature of the Case, or the advantage of Opportunity may lead thereunto.

6. Communion of Churches in this Country having so good opportu-

nity for it, it is meet to be Commended to them, as their duty thus to Confociate. For,

1. Communion of Churches being commanded, and Confociation being but an Agreement to practise it, this must needs be a duty also. *Pfal.* 119. 106. *Neh.* 10. 28, 29.

2. *Paul* an Apostle fought with much labour the *Conference, Concurrence* and *Right-hand of Fellowship* of [46] other *Apostles*: and Ordinary Churches and Elders have not less need each of other, to prevent *their running in vain*, *Gal.* 2. 2, 6, 9.

3. Those General Scripture Rules touching the need and use of Counsel, and help in weighty Cases, concern all Societies and Polities, Ecclesiastical as well as Civil. *Prov.* 11. 14. & 15. 22. & 20. 18. & 24 6. *Ecd.* 4. 9, 10, 12.

4 The Pattern in *Acts* 15. holds forth a Warrant for Councils, which may be greater or less as the matter shall require.

5 Concurrence and Communion of Churches in Gospel Times, is not obscurely held forth in *Isa.* 29. 23, 24, 25 *Zeph.* 3. 9. *1 Cor.* 11 16 & 14. 32, 36

6 There has constantly been in these Churches a profession of Communion, in giving the Right-hand of Fellowship at the Gathering of Churches, & Ordination of Elders, which importeth a Confociation, and obligeth to the practice thereof; without which we should want also an Ex[47]pedient and sufficient Cure for Emergent Church Difficulties and Differences, with the want whereof our way is charged, but unjustly, if this part of the Doctrine were truly practised

7, *The manner of the Churches Agreement herein, or Entering into this Consecration, may be by each Churches' open Consenting to the things here declared, in answer to the second Question, as also to what is said thereabout in Chap. 15. & 16. Of the Platform of Discipline, with reference to other Churches in this Colony and Country, as in Prop. 5th is before Expressed.*

8. *The manner of Exercising and practising that Communion, which*

this Consent or Agreement specially tendeth unto, may be, by making use occasionally of Elders or able Brethren of other Churches, or by the more solemn Meetings of both Elders and Messengers in less or greater Councils, as the Matter shall require. THE END.

ERRATA.

IN the Preface p. 10. line 6. read with the p. 3. l. 20 f. *Arabia*, r. *Antioch*. p. 13. l. 8. f. *Baghaw*, r. *Bagshaw*. p. 18 l. 8. f. of r. in p. 10 r. Occupations. p. 24 l. 23. r. 1645.

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